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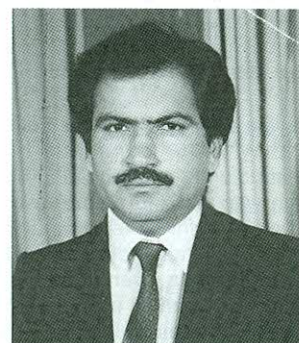
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LEAD ARTICLE

A PERSONAL REFLECTION ON THE CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT PROCESS IN PAKISTAN

By
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INTRODUCTION

Curriculum is a hub of any educational institute through which education is transacted. Curriculum provides a framework to teachers and others for imparting education to the young generation. However, the curriculum development is not any easy job to do it through a team of curriculum experts who might be good but might not have relevant knowledge and experience of teaching curriculum at the school level. Therefore, the curriculum developers face a major dilemma of conceptualising curriculum in the specific context. Given the situation, the curriculum developers fail to address the issues such as what to teach: why to teach: how to teach and when to know whether the purpose of teaching is achieved. In the context of Pakistan, the curriculum developers seemed to be good at seeking an answer of question i.e. what to teach rather than seeking answers of the above four questions. This will help to develop an intended curriculum that can be realised while putting it into operation.

The term curriculum is defined in various ways as people perceive, conceive and interpret it. Curriculum should be considered as a dynamic process which is evolving all the time. To make lived curriculum, it is the job of the teachers and supervisory personnel

to evolve curriculum in response to the specific context. It does not mean that we do not recognise the importance of the centralised national curriculum in Pakistan. Even, within the framework of national curriculum in Pakistan, the teachers can update and improve the curriculum in order to make teaching meaningful and effective. This can only be done by developing teachers as curriculum developers who should have understanding of the dynamics of curriculum development process. We need to go beyond the traditional concept of curriculum that is all planned and unplanned educational activities carried out in schools called curriculum. It should represent the vision, ideology and philosophy of the country. It should have say of teachers and others who are directly affected by the curriculum. It should serve as a vehicle for providing practical educational experiences to the children. This suggests a broader definition of curriculum. However, school curriculum has different dimensions such as explicit, implicit or hidden and the definition of curriculum has to be dependent on the context, ideology and pedagogy of curriculum developers, headteachers and teachers. Given the situation, the role of teachers, headteachers and supervisory personnel becomes very crucial.

In fact, the school curriculum becomes operational when it is enacted by teachers through teaching. However, curriculum contains four major elements - objectives, content, teaching methods, and students assessment / evaluation. Each component is considered to be equally important. In the context of Pakistan, curriculum

is referred to as an official curriculum excluding hidden curriculum whereas the latter also plays a very crucial role in the educational institutions. Thus, curriculum is considered as a vehicle to transfer the societal values and norms through the teaching learning process in the educational institutions. Therefore, curriculum should respond to the societal needs and values so that the young generation could be physically, socially, morally and intellectually developed as active citizens. The following sections will discuss the curriculum development process and its implications for education in Pakistan.

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT IN THE LIGHT OF NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICIES

After the independence of Pakistan, the first educational conference was convened in Karachi in 1947 to restructure and reshape the whole process of education including the process of curriculum in order to make curriculum effective and responsive to the needs of the country. But, the fruitful results could not be achieved. Therefore, in 1959 the national commission on education was set up to review the whole education system of the country. Although, it was time consuming task, it produced an explicit framework for promoting education in Pakistan aiming at restructuring the education system. The objectives of education were elaborated and emphasis was laid on the over all development of an individual through education process so that he / she could become effective member of the society. But due to several reasons, our education system was not to fully achieve the desired objective.

In late 1960s, it was realized that there was a need to formulate new education policy in order to bring about changes in the education as a whole. This policy also focused on the quality education and character building of the young generation that appeared to be marvellous on paper other than putting these ideas into practice through the curriculum. After a few years a new government took over and announced another educational policy in 1972 for a period of 8 years which provided a comprehensive list of objectives of education including the promotion of ideology of Pakistan, building national cohesion by promoting social and cultural harmony among the people, nurturing the total personality of the individual, mobilizing the youth for leadership roles. It was proposed that these objectives can be achieved through the translation of curriculum into classroom practice. For example; the Educational Policy (1972-80) mentioned that 'relevant curricula will be prepared in line with the nation's changing social and economic needs compatible with its basic ideology and to provide a massive shift from general education to more agro technical education' (Government of Pakistan 1972). In the light of the above policy objectives, the curricula at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels were revised and implemented in the educational institutions but the policy could not fully achieve its targets. However, another educational policy was introduced in 1979. This policy also retained more or less the same objectives of the past policies. However, this policy laid an emphasis on the individual as a good Muslim and making him / her effective member of Muslim Ummah. Education Policy,

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emphasised the need for creating awareness in every student that he/ she as a member of Pakistani nation was also a part of the universal Muslim Ummah and that it was expected of him/her to contribute towards the welfare of fellow Muslims.

In line with the National Education Policy 1979, a gigantic task of restructuring or renovating curriculum was done to ensure that adequate content on Islam and Islamic ideology was included and due coverage was given to instructional materials aimed at promotion of national cohesion and integration. Textbooks of all levels were revised to ensure that Islamic ideology was protected and high academic standards were maintained. The concept of an integrated curricula and textbooks was also reinforced. At the primary level, more emphasis was given to practical work and creative activities so that children could gain desired attitudes and skills. However, Education Policy 1979 clearly stated that before revising the existing curriculum, the evaluative studies will be undertaken to identify strengths and weaknesses of the existing curriculum which seemed an encouraging trend to develop curriculum in line with findings of evaluative research. In the past, looking at the curriculum and textbooks it appears that no systematic research/ evaluation was conducted to develop bases for the revision and restructure of the curriculum. Therefore, our process of curriculum development was more relied on their intuitive knowledge and arm chair research approach of curriculum planners who failed to consider the reality of instructional and learning milieu. However, the revision of curriculum and textbooks has become a regular feature without much improvement. Our school curriculum has to be based on research so that the balanced and coherent curriculum and textbooks could be developed. This can only be possible by developing expertise of personnel responsible for the preparation and production of books.

After a period of about 13 years a new National Education Policy was announced called the National Education Policy 1992-2002 which emphasised the importance of an Islamic Order enabling the students to understand the message

of the Holy Quran, imbibe the spirit of Islam, and appreciating its world view in the context of scientific and technological advancements. This policy endorsed some of the factors such as limited financial resources, poor appreciation of educational priorities, inadequate delivery system, population pressure, low participation of education, poor quality of teaching, overloaded textbooks, lack of self learning etc. The National Education Policy 1992-2002 further revealed that our education system has not been able to build the capacity of human capital which could provide high rates of return to society. In order to develop institutional capacity building, policy envisaged the improved quality of public instruction, textbooks, evaluation techniques, and teachers training. The most important thing was that it highlighted the importance of redefining the role of teachers. The Educational Policy further provided the seventeen principles as a conceptual framework to restructure the education system in the country. However, some measures were taken to renovate curriculum in line with the above conceptual framework. It would have been better if these measures were based on research outcomes. Like other educational policies, this policy also seemed to be based on rhetoric rather than reality.

Following the National Education Policy 1992-2002, the Government of Pakistan announced the current National Education Policy in 1998 which also emphasised the importance of the 'curriculum as a central covenant of educational development' which needed major reforms. It suggested the starting of a new cycle of curriculum development at all levels of education by professionals, who are trained in the science of curriculum development; bringing about cognitive compatibility between one level of curriculum and the next; eliminating unnecessary overcrowding of subjects in the curricula and allowing the production of competitive textbooks in the private sector with the possibility of different books to be prescribed by different institutions.

This issue had also been highlighted in the Eighth Five Year Plan (1993-98) that the education would be improved through "Qualitative

improvements of physical infrastructure, curricula (by making the courses demand-oriented), textbooks, teachers training programmes, and examination system at all levels of education" (Government of Pakistan 1994, p.300). However, research has not been considered as an integral part of curriculum development and evaluation process.

PROCESS OF CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT IN PAKISTAN

Before 1972, there was no permanent institution responsible for curriculum development in Pakistan. Saeed (1977) noted that before this time, curriculum development was not visualized as distinct, separate and specialized function. The entire curricular activity was carried out through committees which were created for a specific purpose at a specific time and were dissolved as soon as the task was over. To fulfill the gigantic task of curriculum revision and further development, the National Bureau of Curriculum in Islamabad was reorganized and strengthened in 1972. A primary feature which distinguished the education system in general and curriculum in particular, however, in all four provinces of Pakistan, parallel Bureaux of Curriculum and Extension Wings were established in 1972 independently aimed at revising the school curriculum in close collaboration with the Central Bureau of Curriculum and Textbooks, Islamabad, but the role of the Provincial Bureaux of Curriculum and Extension Centre was somewhat limited (Memon 1989).

The present processes of curriculum development are based on the center-periphery approach which emphasizes achieving the desired objectives with the formulation of aims and goals by the bureaucrats at the central level under the directives of the education policy. The goals provide a platform for the development of curriculum and textbooks. The provincial curriculum committees consist of concerned teachers, heads of schools, teacher educators, subject experts and curriculum experts who work on the proposals. After prolonged deliberation, the provincial committees formulate and try out the draft and arrange the test edition of the textbooks and training of teachers. After necessary amendment,

the modified provincial draft is placed before the national curriculum committee under the control of central government for formulating a uniform draft for the whole country. It may be noted that the central government is the only guiding and controlling authority in this matter, and final approval is therefore, only sought from the central government. Therefore, the textbooks and relevant instructional material are published in collaboration with the Provincial Bureaux of Curriculum and Extension Wings. In reality, the renewal of the curricula is either based on 'arm chair research' or 'intuitive knowledge' of the so called experts of curriculum in general or imported innovation from western countries in particular. In some cases, donor-driven innovations are also introduced and their impact on the improvement of education as a whole has to be examined.

Under the current situation, the schools are effectively discouraged from devising and using their own curriculum. Teachers are legally bound to use the printed books which are approved by the relevant provincial Textbook Boards which acts as 'gatekeepers' to make sure that prescribed books are in use in the schools. One of the Textbook Boards in its circular mentioned that all the heads of schools, teachers, parents and students are requested to see that the textbooks prepared and published under the authority of the Sindh Textbook Board alone are purchased, and no book other than these is used in the classroom (Sindh Textbook Board, 1987). This indicates that the teachers' authority is restricted to use of the prescribed books in order to avoid running any risk that students will not be specially prepared for the relevant examination which are all based on the official syllabus. Public prestige and status of secondary schools is primarily based on the relevant success of their students in the examination.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS ON CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

The poor curriculum development process is a general perceived dilemma of the developing countries since many curricular innovations developed in USA and UK had been directly imported to the educational system of a variety of

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lum which might not work in the real context of education in Pakistan. However, the effective utilization of resources are to be ensured. This only depends on the effective school management and the participation of teachers in curriculum development process. The role of headteachers and teachers needs to be re-examined in the context of the next millennium with reference to curriculum management.

CONCLUSION

Efforts are made at the governmental level to bring about the reforms in education and accordingly the curriculum was restructured but the desired objectives of education have not yet been achieved so far. The curriculum developers need to understand the context of curriculum before initiating any change. The change should be carefully planned through maximum involvement of the curriculum users including teachers so that the curriculum could be implemented effectively. Another factor which is more important that is teacher development which is the low priority in Pakistan. The teachers should be trained in a way that they should become reflective practitioners and researches to solve their own academic and professional problems. They could facilitate the students learning in the classroom. Looking at the objectives of educational policies, it seems the curriculum planners failed to understand these objectives and translate them into curriculum draft. As a result most of the objectives remained on paper rather than in practice. Teachers should also be encouraged to enrich and update the curriculum in the light of classroom requirements. This will lead to create an environment of professionalism among the teachers who are real decision makers of the curriculum implementation in their classrooms. We need to regard teachers as professional practitioners whose advice in the curriculum and school management matters should be valued. We also need to create framework based on combination of both top down and bottom up approaches of curriculum management in which teachers and curriculum developers will be able to share their practical experiences and challenges of curriculum development.

crucial factor in the curriculum process. Curriculum development cannot proceed unless teachers are available and willing to participate. Hence, there is a need for a cooperative endeavour and mutual understanding between the teachers and curriculum developers which may serve as a base for stable kind of curriculum improvement. Many curriculum specialists such as Tanner and Tanner (1980) strongly believed that the availability of expert assistance for teachers in implementing the new ideas would facilitate teachers in solving their problems at the practical level. Hoyle (1980) described *extended professionalism* which could also guide teachers action at the classroom level while translating new curriculum into practice. According to him individuals are creative and schools can only adopt the ideas of individuals. He believed that *extended professionalism* tends to share their pedagogical problems with others and solve them with collaboration. They, thereby contribute towards overcoming the problems of curriculum change. In fact, planning of the curriculum is a far more sophisticated activity than most of the present amateur planners seem to recognize. The oversimplification of curricular issues puts education itself at risk and must lead to covering up of educational standards rather than the raising of standards which current policies purport to be seeking (Kelly 1989).

To understand the curriculum changes McKinney and Westbury (1975) mentioned that it was necessary to understand how to bring about curriculum change would seem to be helplessly incomplete unless an investigation into the factors which tend to perpetuate existing practice, was included. The decade of the 1960s and the early years of the 1970s have called the *era of innovation* in education particularly in the developing countries including Pakistan. The main purpose of initiating and promoting innovations as on the premise that they would effect a dramatic improvement in the quality of managerial efficiency in the educational enterprise to educate more students in less time with fewer teachers with greater efficiency of space utilization and at low cost (Tanner and Tanner 1980). This reflects the industrial approach to education and curriculum

developing countries. Imported innovations produce a facade of change but have little impact on classroom process (Havelock and Huberman 1977, Klein and Eshel 1980, Lewin 1981). Therefore, the curriculum policy remained on paper rather than in practice. Thus the targets of the policy were not achieved. Teachers participation in the curriculum planning has received a little attention from the curriculum experts. In fact, curriculum improvement depends on teachers being more thoughtful about their work. Tanner and Tanner (1980) noted that there is no substitute for the intelligent participation of the teacher in curriculum improvement. They went on to say that the curriculum development rests on teachers' development and on the professionalism of the teacher. In theory, it is said that the provision of teachers' participation in curriculum is made but in practice curriculum planning is overwhelming dominated by the bureaucrats and educationists who never gained experience of teaching (Ghafoor 1979). For example; Sheikh (1970) mentioned that committees are loaded by the college and university teachers and there is no proportional representation of school teachers who are ultimately responsible for implementing the curricula at the classroom level.

This dilemma is not only perceived in developing countries but also exists in the developed countries (Kelly 1989). This indicates that curriculum development is not only the practical problem of the developing countries but the developed countries also encounter it. Generally, curriculum is considered as one sided and restricted activity which is only attributed to and considered as job for bureaucrats who are unaware of the classroom situation and its inherent demands. Tanner and Tanner (1980) noted those involved in bringing about a change more readily accept and adopt the new ideas than those who are not involved. A substantive evidence suggests that even in countries where teachers were not in short supply and were well educated and trained they were unlikely to take up curriculum innovations unless they were fully involved in the whole process.

Considering teachers' participation in curriculum development Kerr (1969) also reminded us that it is a